



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

Vision: Sustainably Managing Atlantic Coastal Fisheries

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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ASMFC South Atlantic Board Approves Draft FMP for Atlantic Migratory Group Cobia for Public Comment

Arlington, VA – The Commission’s South Atlantic State/Federal Fisheries Management Board approved the Draft Interstate Fishery Management Plan (FMP) for Atlantic Migratory Group (AMG) Cobia for public comment. The intent of the Draft FMP is to complement federal AMG cobia management actions and distribute catches among member states through a proposed allocation strategy.

The Draft FMP was initiated in response to recent overages of the federal annual catch limit (ACL) for AMG Cobia. The Draft FMP addresses immediate management and conservation goals in anticipation of a new benchmark AMG cobia stock assessment in 2018. Management options include size, bag, and vessel limits to complement federal measures along with proposed *de minimis* options for Mid-Atlantic states (Maryland through New York) whose landings are minimal or episodic.

The most significant change may come in the form of state-specific recreational allocations. The current ACL for AMG cobia is 670,000 pounds (620,000 pound recreational ACL and a 50,000 pound commercial quota). Managing the recreational ACL on a coastwide basis has resulted in federal closures and significant overages in 2015 and 2016, disrupting fishing opportunities and jeopardizing the health of the stock. The Draft FMP contains a number of proposed options to allocate a recreational harvest limit (equal to the federal recreational ACL) to the four primary states (Georgia-Virginia) to allow those states more flexibility in developing seasonal options that best suit their specific state’s recreational and for-hire interests.

At this time, the options for the commercial AMG cobia fishery do not include state specific allocations and generally complement the proposed federal requirements. It is expected that the states from Georgia through Virginia will be conducting public hearings on the Draft FMP. The details of those hearings will be released in a subsequent press release.

The Draft FMP is available at http://www.asmfc.org/files/PublicInput/DraftCobiaFMP_PublicComment_Aug2017.pdf or on the Commission’s website, www.asmfc.org, under Public Input. Fishermen and other interested groups are

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission was formed by the 15 Atlantic coastal states in 1942 for the promotion and protection of coastal fishery resources. The Commission serves as a deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and anadromous species.

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encouraged to provide input on the Draft FMP either by attending state public hearings or providing written comment. Public comment will be accepted until **5:00 PM (EST) on October 6, 2017** and should be forwarded to Louis Daniel, FMP Coordinator, 1050 N. Highland St, Suite A-N, Arlington, VA 22201; 703.842.0741 (FAX) or at comments@asmfc.org (Subject line: Draft Cobia FMP). Final action on the Draft FMP is scheduled to occur in October 2017. For more information, please contact Louis Daniel, Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at ldaniel@asmfc.org or 252-342-1478.

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